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JOHN G. HALL, PROPRIETOR.

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The Elk Advocate.

JOHN G. HALL, Proprietor.

RIDGWAY, PENNA., MAY 16th, 1867.

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Selected Miscellany.

THE THREE PELLETS OF BREAD.

An Excellent Story in Three Chapters.

I.

In 1824, towards the end of October,
ten young men were concluding a re-
past at one of the tables of the Cafe de
Paris. The succulent dishes had been
apparently well seasoned with wine, for
all their faces were illuminated, and all
were talking at the same time.

Nor was it surprising that the meet-
ing had been a jovial one. The am-
phitryon—George Benier by name—
only the other day sub-lieutenant of the
5th Regiment of Dragoons, had un-
expectedly inherited a fortune estimated
at six hundred thousand francs. Barely
a month had elapsed since he had re-
ceived, whilst serving in Spain, the
news of the death of an uncle, who had
left him heir to the accumulations of an
industrious and well-spent life. He had
obtained a leave of absence, and had
hurried to the capital to realize his for-
tune. He had also invited what few
friends, chiefly college chums, he had
in Paris to participate in his happiness.
He had nine—in a day or two he would
have fifty. A man with a well-lined
pocket has always plenty of friends.

The banquet held in honor of this
sudden accession of funds was coming
to a conclusion—that is to say, the party
were at their last bottles of champagne.
Awaiting coffee, every one was laughing,
talking, and gesticulating, without con-
cerning himself about listening or be-
ing listened to. The host, who was
more animated even than the others,
probably because, in his quality of host,
he had deemed it necessary to set a
good example, was endeavoring to get
a word in concerning his feats of valor
in the Peninsula; exulting upon the
assault of the Trocadero on the 31st of
August, 1823, and the delivery of
Ferdinand VII, from the hands of the
Cortes; but every one was too happy to
listen to details.

In the meantime, coffee had been
brought in. The young man—George
Benier was in his twenty-first year—
was lifting his cup to his lips, when he
suddenly put it down again with an ex-
clamation of surprise and disgust.
'Garcon!' he shouted, in a voice
that made the whole establishment
start, 'take this cup away at once.'
And, as he said this, he pointed to
two flies that had been stupid enough
to take a bath in the hot fluid—a bath
which had cost them their lives. One of
the garcons took away the cup, whilst
another busied himself in repairing the
disaster. The guests were laughing
heartily at the discomfiture of the
lieutenant of dragoons. 'Ah! ah!'
said one, 'George is afraid of a fly!'

But Prosper Dyonnet, a college chum,
interposed: 'Don't you remember? he
used to kill them by hundreds, his con-
science troubles him, and now the sight
of two dead flies awakens his remorse.'
The interpolation excited renewed
laughter, in which George joined heart-
ily.

'True, gentlemen, I always had a
horror of flies, and I became so skilful
by dint of practice in killing them with
pellets of bread, that I got the surname
of 'Tueur de mouches.' I have not lost
my skill yet, I can tell you; but if I as-
sassinat a fly, that is no reason why I
should also swallow them.'

'Well said, observed one of the
guests; and with after dinner thought-
fulness, and the love of fun natural to
youth, he proposed that George should
give them proof that he was still entitled
to what he was pleased to designate as a
glorious title to distinction.

To this effect a roll of bread was taken
from a table close by. George Benier,
as serious as if he were about to solve a
problem in mathematics, broke it, took
out the crumb, and began to prepare his
ammunition. Having made three pel-
lets, he held them out in his open hand.

'Now, he said, 'who'll bet that I
don't kill a fly at each shot?'

'We'll all bet,' shouted the guests.—
'What shall it be? A monster punch?'

'Good; but what distance do you al-
low me?'

'We leave that to you—a pellet of
bread is not precisely a conical ball.'

In the interval, a man, apparently
above fifty years, with gray moustaches
and coat buttoned up—evidently an old
soldier—had come into the cafe. Or-
dering a cup of chocolate, and was read-
ing as he awaited his refreshment. The
room was crowded with flies, half stupe-
fied by the approach of winter, and
George Benier had settled upon the new
corner—one on his arm, another on his
neck, and a third had the impudence
actually to alight on the very hand that
held the paper. The guests watched the
direction which George's eyes had
taken, and the some malicious idea oc-
curred the same moment to all their ex-
cited brains. This idea was mutually
exchanged by nods, and smiles, and in-
telligent glances, but not formulated in-

to words. That would have spoiled the
fun. George, encouraged by these
looks of approbation, made his prepara-
tions for the commission of a grievous
act of folly.

Placing one of the pellets on his
thumb, and holding it there by the me-
dian finger curved into a bow, so as to
act as a spring, he took aim at the right
hand of the man with the gray mous-
taches. It must be said to his credit,
however, that he hesitated for a mo-
ment, a ray of sense flared across his
mind, and he turned round to look at
his friends. But all he saw there was
encouragement by nods and winks and
smiles. It was such fun! Alas! how
many foolish things are done under the
absurd impression that there is some-
thing funny in them!

George's thumb went off; the pellet
was shot forth, and killed the fly that
lay on the officer's hand.

'Superb!' ejaculated his friends, but
in subdued tones, not to interfere with
the progress of their rich friend's exper-
iments.

As to the veteran, he never moved,
but continued to read his paper as if
nothing had happened. Encouraged by
his success, and excited by the applause
of his friends, as also by the attention of
other spectators who had been attracted
to what was going on, George Benier
took aim at his shoulder, and the second
fly fell a victim to his skill. After this
there was no receding. The man in the
buttoned-up coat persisted in ignor-
ing the insults upon his person; there
was only one fly more to kill to inaugu-
rate the monster punch, and that fly was
stretching out its fore-feet not many in-
ches below the formidable gray mous-
taches. Off went the third pellet and the
intrusive insect fell dead. The exper-
iment concluded, there was no longer
any cause for silence, and all the guests
united in shouting 'Vive le Tueur de
mouches!'

But whilst they were thus jubilant
and triumphant, the man in the but-
toned-up coat had slowly raised, and
stooping, he deliberately picked up the
three pellets of bread, which done he
walked over, quite calmly, to where
George sat with his friends. The laugh
now suddenly ceased, and the attention
of the other spectators became breath-
less. Strangers, as well as the friends
of the 'Tueur de mouches,' knew that
matters could not stop there. A pin
might have been heard to fall in the
whole cafe.

The man with the gray moustaches
saluted the company. The salutation
was respectfully returned by George and
his guests. George was a little pale,
but calm. The veteran, extending his
hand, in the palm of which were the
three pellets of bread, was about to
speak. But George, who would not
allow, even for half a second, that it
should be supposed that he would leave
the responsibility on any one but him-
self, anticipated him.

'It was I, sir; I shot those pellets.'
The unknown bowed again.

'That is sufficient, sir.'
So saying, he quietly unbuttoned his
coat, and drew forth a card from his
waistcoat pocket.

'Monsieur,' he said, 'will be good
enough to show me that he is as skil-
ful with a sword as he is with a pellet
of bread.'

'At your orders, sir,' replied George,
as he exchanged cards with his adver-
sary.

Upon the stranger's card was gra-
ven: 'Louis Rodet, ex-Captain of Light
Infantry.'

Next morning at ten the young
soldier of the Trocadero and the veteran
of Austerlitz and of Wagram met, ac-
companied each by two friends, in the
Boulevard de Boulogne. George was a
proficient in sword exercise, but by no
means so much so as the captain.

After a few passes he had to give up
the combat, his right arm being pierced
through and through. As the veteran
left the field, he saluted his wounded
and discomfited antagonist with great
courtesy:—

'Till we have the pleasure of meet-
ing again, sir,' he said.

'You are really too kind,' retorted
George Benier.

And following the old soldier with
his eyes as he took his departure, ac-
companied by two veterans of his own
stamp.—

'Ah! ca!' he muttered, 'what does
that animal mean with his 'pleasure of
meeting again'? Does he not think one
lesson of politeness sufficient? The idea
is anything but reassuring!'

George Benier had to keep his bed
two months. His wound was severe,
and he had to observe complete repose.
After these two months, a third was en-
joined in his room for convalescence.

'It was well worth while,' he said to
himself, 'to hurry from Spain to claim
my inheritance, and to have to spend
three months in suffering and tedium!'

But at length he was free, and happy
in being able to walk, eat, run, and
laugh like everybody else. Prosper
Dyonnet remained his boon-companion

although he entertained a slight grudge
towards him for his folly in resuscitating
his talents as a collegian in so inoppor-
tune a manner. But he remembered also
that George had had a few glasses of
champagne too many, and he forgave
him. Prosper, besides, knew Paris inti-
mately, and not only assisted him in
procuring a carriage and horses, but
also introduced him to the world.

II.

THE SECOND PELLET.

During the carnival of 1825, George
Benier made the acquaintance at an op-
era ball, of a lady who was much sought
after at that period, and who was known
as the Baroness de Belmonte. We say
known, for she was no more a baroness
than her mother, who sold antiques in
winter and oranges in summer. Despite
his humble origin, however, the baron-
ess was beautiful and clever, and she
managed to captivate the young man.—
He could not sleep at night, and spent
the day in deploring to his friend, Pro-
per Dyonnet the cruelty of the fair one.

Not that the baroness objected to the
young man's attentions, but she knew
her interests too well to succumb at
once. Three weeks had passed in walks
and drives, the lady had accepted both
cashmere and diamonds, but as yet
had given no signs of a reciprocal affec-
tion. George began to weary of laying
siege to so impregnable a place; scenes
of recrimination occurred, till the lady,
fearing she might lose her lover, showed
some symptoms of relenting.

George was walking arm in arm with
his friend Prosper on the Boulevards;
he was in high spirits; visions of hap-
piness were before him which he did
not fail to confide to his bosom friend,
and they agreed to celebrate the happy
turn in events by a repast at the Cafe
Anglais. They had just reached the
threshold, and George was about to step
in, when he was stopped by a voice inter-
posed:—

'I beg your pardon, sir. A word, if
you please.'

George turned round in anger. The
voice was well known to him—very un-
pleasantly so—and he and his friend
Prosper recognized at once the man of
the Cafe de Paris, the man with the
gray moustaches and buttoned-up coat—
Captain Rodet. Both were discon-
certed—the meeting was not agreeable
—but the young officer of dragoons,
quickly recovering himself, inquired, in
a naughty tone, what the veteran wanted
with him.

'Very little, sir,' replied the latter, in
a tone of exquisite politeness. 'I wish
to return this to you, and at the same
time to announce to you that, now you
are perfectly recovered, I will put it in
your power to receive a portion of the
remainder.'

George had mechanically opened the
paper handed him by the captain. It
contained a pellet of bread.

'Monsieur!' he said—and he was
about to add, 'I thought that a meet-
ing, followed by a severe wound, was
sufficient punishment for an act of
thoughtlessness; but there was some-
thing so austere and implacable in the
veteran's looks that the words stuck in
his throat. But Prosper had not the
same reasons as his friend for declining
to reason upon the matter.

'Monsieur,' he said, addressing the
captain, 'unless you are impelled by
motives of personal hostility, I cannot
understand what interest you can have
in exacting another meeting on the part
of M. George Benier. The insult was
slight, you must admit; and is not your
honor satisfied by the blood already
spilt?'

But the veteran never wavered in the
inflexible expression which he had as-
sumed, and, with his eyes fixed on
George, he awaited an answer without
vouchsafing a reply to Prosper.

'Captain,' said the former, seeing
there was no alternative, 'I do not ac-
cept the words pronounced by my
friend. I am ready to meet you where
and when you like, and we will fight as
much as you like.'

'To-morrow morning—the same place
and the same hour as before,' replied the
captain who had resumed his most affa-
ble manner.

'Be it so,' replied George Benier.

Poor George! his skill in killing flies
with pellets of bread was destined to
entail a vast amount of misery. On the
occasion of this, his second encounter,
anger and hatred of his rival imparted
double strength to his arm, and gave
unwonted vigor to his thrusts. But it
was in vain; the veteran parried his
sword as coolly as if fencing with foils.

The struggle lasted a long time; George
became exasperated by his efforts and
exhaustion, and at length fell on the
ground; the captain's sword had
penetrated his chest. To add to his
horror, as he lay fainting from loss of
blood, he heard the old soldier say,
'Adieu till we meet again!'

This time George remained three
months in bed, and another month in
his arm chair. During these long days
of suffering and debility, friendship
alone remained faithful to the poor pa-

tient. Love had taken its flight. The
first day that George—whose life the
surgeons had despaired of for three long
weeks—was allowed to speak, Prosper
felt inclined to avoid him, but George
said:—

'Stay, stay! Who would love me if
I were fool enough to quarrel with you?'

Prosper shook his head sorrowfully.

'Alas!' he said, 'sickness tries
friendship, and love, too, does it not?'
Well, frankly, you could not expect—'

'That Madame de Belmonte would
become my nurse? No; most assured-
ly I did not expect that. But did she
send to inquire after me?'

'Yes, for four days consecutively.'
'Four days! Well, when I get well
I will send her four bracelets. We
must not expect impossibilities.'

What most surprised Prosper Dyon-
net was, that as George Benier recov-
ered his strength, instead of gaining spir-
its with improving health, he seemed to
remain anxious, and at times sorrowful.

'What troubles you George?' he in-
quired. 'The doctor has said that on
Saturday you can go out in the carriage,
and yet you seem to experience some
secret grief. Is it possible that the
memory of Madame Belmonte haunts
you? She was not worthy of your love!'

George, smiling grimly, replied.

'Prosper, I am melancholy because I
am afraid.'

'Afraid of what?'

George contented himself with hand-
ing a card to his friend and buried his
face in his hands.

'Captain Louis Rodet!' exclaimed
Prosper. 'Fool, idiot that I was! Yes,
I understand now, my poor George.—
You need not blush; you fear to meet
that man again, who is more implacable
than if you had deprived him of honor,
fortune—of all that was dear to him.'

'Yes, Prosper, that is what I dread.
He has still one pellet to receive satis-
faction for, and he keeps it for the last.
If I meet that man again he will kill me!'

'Listen, George,' said Prosper, taking
a seat by his side. 'That man is an
assassin. I am not a soldier, and I
should have recourse to other means of
getting rid of so bloodthirsty an antag-
onist. I would denounce him to the po-
lice.'

George shuddered.

'No,' he said, 'I would never humble
myself to that extent. I have been an
officer, and I could not, without brand-
ing myself as a coward, take the step
which you recommend.'

'Well, then, George, there is only one
alternative. We must separate.'

'Why so?'

'Because you must go to Italy; and
what is more, you must leave this in a
fortnight. You must remain there six
months or a year.'

III.

THE THIRD PELLET.

George Benier, although deeply
grieved to part from his friend, resolved,
after mature consideration, to follow his
advice. A fortnight had not elapsed
ere he was on his way to a change of
climate and scenery. After a month's
absence he had regained his health and
spirits. He had dismissed from his
mind all thoughts of his formidable en-
emy, who, possessed of a miserable pellet
of bread instead of a dishonored bill,
had made an ex-officer of dragoons take
flight to other realms. It was at this
epoch that his friend Prosper received
a long letter from him. It was dated
6th of September, 1825, Naples. Ref-
erring to previous communications,
George reminded his friend that he
had mentioned to him his having met
a young person walking with her moth-
er on the Monte Olivetto, with whom he
had been very much smitten; that he
had ascertained through his friend
Count Popoli that the ladies were
French, that the mother's name was
Madame Castillon, that she was a widow,
and wealthy; that the daughter's name
was Blanche, that she was pretty
enough to put in a frame. Well, since
he had made that communication he had
been introduced to the parties, acquain-
tance had ripened into affection, and in
a month's time he was to be married at
the church of San Domenico. He in-
sisted upon Prosper Dyonnet being
present at the wedding; he must come
away at once. The ladies, on their
side expected one of their relations—a
brother of Madame Castillon—whom he
(George Benier) was said to be acquaint-
ed with; but they would not tell him
his name, as they intended to give him
an agreeable surprise! Purchase, he
said, he and Dyonnet might travel to-
gether.

George was seated behind his be-
trothed, in a box at the theatre of San
Carlo. The curtain had just fallen
upon the second act of an opera of Pie-
tini's. George was muttering some
words in Blanche's ear which made her
smile. Madame Castillon, like a good
mother that she was, was looking else-
where, so that George might talk and
Blanche might smile.

Suddenly George, whose eyes were
wandering mechanically towards the

stalls, stopped in the middle of a phrase.
He turned pale, and a groan, that
almost resembled the rattle of a mori-
bund, escaped from his chest. The two
ladies surprised and terrified, turned
towards him.

'Farewell! farewell!' he exclaimed.

And hurrying to the door of the box,
he threw himself into the corridor, and
thence gained the square of San Carlo.

'Where is my carriage? O, here it
is! Whip, coachman, whip!'

'Where is Monsieur going to?'

'Where am I going? Where you
like. Right before you, if you like it;
only start!'

Without replying, the driver mounted
his box, and when the horses, worn out
with the speed at which they were
driven, came to a dead stop, George was
eight leagues from Naples.

'What is the matter?' said George,
putting his head out of the window.

'Why don't we go on, John?'

'Because monsieur's horses cannot
go any farther,' replied John.

George jumped out, and, after some
loss of time, it was ascertained that a
village and post-house were close by,
and thither he hastened. There hap-
pened at the very moment of his ar-
rival to be a post-chaise at the door, to
which a couple of post-horses were being
harnessed. The master stood by
superintending the operation.

'Monsieur,' said George to this man,
'I want two horses for my carriage.'

'Very sorry, sir, but I have no more
horses. These two are the last!'

George rushed at the chaise and
opened the door. A man—an English-
man, to judge by his whiskers—was
seated within.

'Monsieur,' said George, 'I have a
request of great importance to make to
you.'

'Speak, sir,' replied the traveller,
with an accent that did not belie his
whiskers.

'Will you give up your horses?'

'Impossible, sir.'

'I will give you a thousand, two
thousand francs in exchange for the con-
cession.'

'I do not want your money, sir.'

'Sir, your kindness will save my life.'

'I have not time to be kind.'

'Sir, I will make you repent your
cruelty!'

'Repent! Ah! Postillion, stop a
moment.'

The Englishman stepped out of the
chaise, and with characteristic calmness
said:—

'What do you mean, sir, by saying
you will make me repent?'

'What I meant I scarcely know.—
Perhaps I am mad; but mad or not, it
depends on you to prevent me from be-
ing killed!'

'And what is it to me, sir, if you are
killed?'

George, irritated by his contemptuous
indifference, raised his hand.

At the very moment, a noise was
heard on the road. It was a post-chaise
coming at full gallop. George heard his
own name called out in a well known
voice.

'Ah! I am lost!' exclaimed the
young man, and a cold perspiration be-
dewed his brow.

It was Captain Rodet in pursuit,—it
was Captain Rodet who was calling to
him. George saw him stopping rapidly
toward him. At the sight of the man
whom he looked upon as his executioner,
George advanced to the encounter.

'Kill me,—assassinate me, sir!' he
exclaimed, 'for I warn you I shall not
fight. I am a coward; I admit it.—
Kill me at once; for I am frightened of
you!'

George notwithstanding his unmanly
avowal, stood in the presence of his en-
emy, his head erect, his arms crossed on
his breast, as if awaiting death. The
captain looked at the young man as if
thunderstruck, but a strange smile
played upon his lips.

At last the captain opened his mouth,
and holding out his right hand to
George, said, 'Who says anything about
killing, sir?' He said in an affectionate
tone. 'Who speaks to you about fight-
ing? Why should I kill you? I am
Blanche's uncle, sir, and I come in her
name to give you this trifle, which be-
longs to you—yourself.'

George looked at the hand that was
held out to him and uttered an excla-
mation of joyful surprise. It contained
the third pellet of bread! The captain
renounced the last meeting to which he
was entitled by the code of honor.